

My Jesus, I Love Thee

By Maggie Moller

Since the start of “The Berean Lamp” ministry in February, we have focused on the life of a different hymn writer every month. Many of the writers of our favorite hymns at Berean Christian Fellowship have been common, everyday people, quietly living their lives for their Savior. This month, as I was thinking of hymns with a “love” theme, I was immediately drawn to “My Jesus, I Love Thee.” As I studied the history of the hymn, I was touched by the life story of the writer of the words as well as the life story of the composer of the music. I thought to myself, *Why should I only focus on the writer of the words? Why not give the story of the music’s composer as well?* Therefore, this month, and in the months to come, I hope to give you the complete stories of the lives of the men and women who gave us our hymns.

William Featherston was born on July 23, 1846, in Montreal, Canada. Very little is known about him except that he gave his life to Christ at an early age and penned the words to “My Jesus, I Love Thee.” He was most likely between the ages of twelve and sixteen when he wrote the beautiful words. Clearly, his young age did not hinder him from having a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. His love for Christ and His saving grace is evident in every line. Sadly, young William died of unknown causes on May 20, 1873, just before his twenty-seventh birthday. Although it is a tragedy in the world’s eyes for one so young to die, William Featherston was ushered into the presence of his beloved Jesus forever. As Paul says in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Adoniram Judson Gordon was born on April 19, 1836, in New Hampton, New Hampshire. Educated at Brown University and Newton Theological Seminary, he was ordained a Baptist minister in 1863. He served in churches throughout Massachusetts, especially at Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston, where he ministered for 26 years.

During his years at Clarendon Street Baptist Church, he aided in reviving the congregation from being spiritually dead and worldly into a strong body of Christ, eager to serve their Savior. He edited many hymnals, and in 1876, he composed the music for “My Jesus, I Love Thee.” Besides editing hymnals, he was in charge of a monthly religious periodical called *The Watchword*. In 1878, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Brown University.

In early 1895, Mr. Gordon contracted pneumonia and died on February 2. Just days before his death, he requested “My Jesus, I Love Thee” to be sung at his funeral. How happy he would be to know that over 100 years after his death, “My Jesus, I Love Thee” is still treasured by so many.

Once again, we have two examples of men who lived their lives quietly serving their Lord. They were not famous or well-acclaimed – just everyday people. But the thing that sets them apart is their dedicated love and service to Christ. In Christ’s eyes, worldly accomplishments mean nothing. The only thing that matters is where your heart is when you die. We should not put off that important decision. We cannot count on always having tomorrow.

If you have not made the decision to put your life in Christ’s Hands and accept His free gift of salvation, don’t wait until it is too late. Once we die, there is no turning back. Trust in Christ’s saving grace just as William Featherston and Adoniram Gordon did, and sing with them for eternity, “My Jesus, I Love Thee!”